

Telecom Immunity for Warrantless Wiretaps

Written by Mike Honda

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President Bush has demanded that Congress grant retroactive immunity to telecommunications companies which may have broken the law by carrying out his warrantless wiretaps, a program widely believed to have been illegal.

The rule of law and civil liberties of the individual are two of America's most treasured ideals. **Granting blanket immunity at the expense of individual liberties, and at the request of an Administration that has run roughshod on our Constitution, would be a grave mistake.** We must not allow the Bush Administration to set precedent where the President can disregard the will of the courts and Congress, disturbing the delicate balance of powers that has ensured the stability of our nation over the last 200 years.

With the Protect America Act expiring this weekend, President Bush [claims](#) that House Democrats "would put American lives at risk" by not granting him expanded wiretapping powers and giving immunity to telecommunications companies. As Richard Clarke, former head of counterterrorism at the National Security Council,

[stated](#)

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Let me be clear: Our ability to track and monitor terrorists overseas would not cease should the Protect America Act expire. If this were true, the president would not threaten to terminate any temporary extension with his veto pen ... For this president, fear is an easier political tactic than compromise. With FISA, he is attempting to rattle Congress into hastily expanding his own executive powers at the expense of civil liberties and constitutional protections.